

Remarks by Donald C. Winter
Secretary of the Navy
USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73)
Arrival Ceremony
Yokosuka, Japan
Thursday, September 25, 2008

People of Yokosuka, Sailors and families of GEORGE WASHINGTON, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here to mark the arrival of USS GEORGE WASHINGTON in Japan.

This is a significant event for the U.S.-Japan security alliance, and for the U.S. Navy's continuing efforts to modernize our fleet to address new and ever-changing security challenges.

The 7th Fleet serves to defend Japan and deter war throughout the region.

By providing one of our newest and most capable carriers—the GEORGE WASHINGTON—to the 7th Fleet, we are demonstrating our commitment to the U.S.-Japan alliance.

I am as pleased to be here today as I was two years ago, when I arrived on USS SHILOH—one of our most capable missile defense ships.

From the SHILOH to the GEORGE WASHINGTON, the U.S. Navy has enhanced our ability to meet the needs of today's evolving threat environment.

U.S. aircraft carriers are the premier warships in our Fleet, and the agreement to send a modern carrier to Yokosuka reflects the priority we place on the U.S.-Japan partnership.

We believe that our presence in Japan has provided economic and security benefits to Japan, as well as the benefits that friendship and mutual cooperation brings to partners who share a common ocean and a common stake in peace.

As we look ahead, we will continue to work closely with the government of Japan as we move to the next phase in our base restructuring in mainland Japan, Okinawa and throughout the Pacific.

On behalf of the people of the United States, I would like to thank the people of Japan and the Japanese leadership for your continued support for the close relationship between our two countries.

You have stood beside us in our efforts to rebuild Afghanistan and give the Afghan people hope for a better future.

The contributions of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, particularly in your leading role in refueling Coalition ships at sea in Operation Enduring Freedom, have been critical to this multi-national effort.

Your sacrifices are greatly appreciated, and your sustained commitment in Afghanistan will help ensure that the hard-won progress we have achieved will be preserved.

I am also gratified to note that U.S.-Japan cooperation in the realm of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief continues to increase.

Through Pacific Partnership 2008, the U.S. and Japan has worked side-by-side with partner nations and non-governmental organizations aboard the hospital ship USNS MERCY, providing medical and civic assistance to this region.

It is yet another positive result of the true partnership between us.

I trust that both sides will continue to value our long-standing alliance.

I am personally committed to strengthening that relationship in every way.

Lastly, I want to thank the people of Japan for the hospitality and friendship that you have extended to our Sailors and their families for many years.

I want to also assure you that we will continue to be sensitive to the feelings and needs of the citizens of Yokosuka.

May our friendship always be based on a spirit of cooperation, mutual respect, and a sincere desire to serve the interests of peace.

Thank you.